

An Integrated, Comprehensive and Sustained Earth Observing System

**Statement by His Excellency John Wood, Head of the New Zealand Delegation
to the Earth Observation Summit
State Department, Washington DC
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Thank you Mr Chairman

The Honorable Secretaries, Ministers, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

New Zealand is here to lend its enthusiastic support to the development of an integrated, comprehensive and sustained Earth Observing System. We express our strong appreciation to the United States, and in particular to the Secretaries of State, Commerce and Energy for taking the initiative to propose and host this summit.

The international community is fortunate in that we have very solid models for intergovernmental collaboration on Earth observations that can guide us in the development and implementation of this bold and visionary proposal. The World Weather Watch system of the World Meteorological Organisation, for example, has been remarkably successful in developing a global atmospheric observing system that enjoys a truly global ownership and support, free sharing of data and derived products, and is of benefit to virtually every country in the world. I note that it was again the United States that provided the impetus for the call by the United Nations on the World Meteorological Organisation to develop a global system for the monitoring and prediction of world weather and climate.

The proposed Earth Observing System is nonetheless a major step up in scale. New Zealand sees it as vital that existing multilateral operational observing programmes, as well as research programmes, are involved in the development and implementation of such a comprehensive system. This will ensure that it has global ownership and support, and that we make the best use of all available information.

Intergovernmental organisations, such as the World Meteorological Organisation, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the Food and Agricultural Organisation, as well as a range of bilateral and multilateral research efforts, need to be at the heart of the development of such an ambitious observing system. New Zealand will be pleased to work with the United States and other summit participants, indeed every country of the world, on the design of an implementation strategy that incorporates those organisations and makes use of synergies between global observing systems, research programmes, and regional needs. Part of this effort will need to focus on the development of robust protocols and strategies for linking research and long-term operational observations that ensure continuity, quality and timeliness of data and their associated products. We are committed to free and unrestricted exchange of those Earth observation data and products that could be considered as global public goods.

New Zealand fully recognises the challenges involved in developing and implementing an Earth Observing System that delivers benefits to all countries. These challenges include a lack of consistent and comprehensive observations in many regions of the world, difficulties with the timely reporting and sharing of data, and access to data and products to support decision making. While no region in the world is entirely free from such challenges, we need to concede that different regions have different priorities and are experiencing different sets of problems. This will be reflected in their engagement and ownership of a global Earth Observing System.

Oceania, of which New Zealand is a part, forms an important part of the global climate system. Vulnerability to global environmental changes, including climate change, is a key concern to our Pacific partners. Good information is vital to ensure the sustainable long-term development of this region. New Zealand is committed to working with countries in the region to ensure that the flow of information associated with a global Earth Observing System, and the benefits that such a system can deliver, really does flow in both directions.

We are well aware of the challenges that large streams of raw data pose to decision-makers in small and developing countries. It is important to note that the benefits

accrued to those countries via a global observing system will depend on products and support tools that enable processing of data to assist with development needs. This applies in particular to the needs of developing countries in such areas as timely hazard warnings, seasonal climate outlooks, regional monitoring of seasonal water supply and demand, and food production.

New Zealand recognises that robust, timely and high-quality information lies at the heart of sound environmental management, and we fully support the aims and objectives of this summit. At the same time, we are aware that, despite best efforts, information about complex Earth systems will always be limited and incomplete. Research and systematic observation is an important component. However, it cannot replace action to mitigate environment pressures and risks and provide good environmental stewardship consistent with a precautionary approach.

New Zealand would like to reiterate its appreciation to the United States for hosting this important Summit, and for providing us with the opportunity to work together on the development of an integrated, comprehensive and sustained Earth Observing System that will be vital in helping us sustain Earth for the benefit of future generations across the globe.

Thank you.